

**STARTING A CADET PROGRAM
TO ASSIST THE
DECREASING RESPONSE BY
THE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS**

Strategic Management of Change

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**An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy
as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program**

November 1997

Abstract

The problem is that the total number of volunteer firefighters and the number of volunteer firefighters responding to emergency alarms in the City of Toppenish are decreasing to a level that is not acceptable.

The purpose of this research project is to determine if a cadet program will enhance the number of firefighters responding to emergency alarms and will ultimately increase the number of volunteer firefighters on the roster.

This study utilizes an evaluative methodology to evaluate the results from the survey. It also uses an action methodology to develop a change management model that would produce a cadet program that would be successful in the Toppenish Fire Department.

The research questions to be answered were:

- 1) Would the firefighters (both paid and volunteer) be supportive of a cadet program?
- 2) Would the firefighters be willing to commit to the training of the cadets if a program were instituted?
- 3) What criteria should the fire department require of the students to become cadets?
- 4) What would the optimal number of cadets be to start a program?

A survey was handed out to the firefighters during a training drill. The firefighters were asked to return the surveys within the week. They could drop it

off at the station in my office or fill it out before they left the training exercise. Of the 18 surveys distributed, 17 surveys were returned.

The research project followed the Change Management Model (CMM) we learned in the Strategic Management of Change Course. This paper mainly deals with the first two steps of the CMM, analysis and planning. Due to time constraints, all steps of the CMM were not able to be accomplished.

The recommendations of the research paper were to continue with the planning of the cadet program, implement the cadet program, work with the other organizations involved in the program, continue to evaluate the program, and recruit volunteers from the cadet program.

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Introduction

The problem is that the total number of volunteer firefighters and the number of volunteer firefighters responding to emergency alarms in the City of Toppenish are decreasing to a level that is not acceptable.

The purpose of this research project is to determine if a cadet program will enhance the number of firefighters responding to emergency alarms and will ultimately increase the number of volunteer firefighters on the roster.

This study utilizes an evaluative methodology to evaluate the results from the survey. It also uses an action methodology to develop a change management model that would produce a cadet program that would be successful in the Toppenish Fire Department.

The number of volunteer firefighters has continually decreased over the past 10 years. This has caused great concern to the fire department, especially as some of the firefighters have begun talking about retiring from the department. We have not been able to attract new volunteers to replace the volunteers that are leaving.

The purpose of this research paper was to study the possibility of starting a cadet program with the local high school to help increase the number of firefighters responding to emergency alarms and to increase the number of volunteers on our roster.

A survey was needed to determine if the cadet program would be accepted by the staff and volunteer firefighters currently on the roster. It was also needed to determine how much support there was to help conduct the training for the cadet program.

The survey asked the following questions:

- 1) Are you comfortable with the number of volunteer firefighters the department currently has?
- 2) Will you support a cadet program to help raise the number of volunteer firefighters we have?
- 3) Will you commit to help with the training of the cadets?
- 4) If a cadet program was started, what criteria do you feel would be important in choosing the candidates? (check which you feel would apply)

☐

Grades

☐

Age

☐

Driving Record

☐

Recommendations

☐

Other

- 5) How many cadets do you envision as being the optimal number?

_____ 4

_____ 6

_____ 8

_____ Other (state number)

- 6) Any other comments would be greatly appreciated.

The Change Management Model (CMM) as discussed in the Strategic

Management of Change class was followed. The first two steps, Analysis and

Planning, were the steps that are incorporated into this research paper. The final two steps, Implementation and Evaluation, are omitted due to time constraints. These two steps will be followed if this program can be done to meet the needs and goals of all the parties involved.

Background and Significance

The City of Toppenish is located in Central Washington State in the Lower Yakima Valley. It is situated on the Yakama Indian Reservation. Toppenish is a rural community surrounded by farms and orchards. The City of Toppenish covers approximately two square miles and has a population of approximately 7,700. Over 60 % of the population is of Hispanic origin. (City of Toppenish, 1995)

The Toppenish Fire Department (TFD) is a combination (career/volunteer) fire department. The department has a Fire Chief, five career firefighters, and 19 volunteer firefighters. The minimum staffing level for the fire department is one. The off-duty firefighters and the volunteer firefighters are allowed to respond to alarms while in the area of the city. The TFD responds to fire and EMS alarms in the City of Toppenish and will also assist any fire department in Yakima County during mutual aid or automatic aid responses. The fire department runs two front-line pumpers, a reserve pumper, and an aid vehicle from one station.

The response by the volunteer firefighters to emergency alarms has been decreasing over the past 10 years. The number of volunteer firefighters on the roster has also been decreasing. This situation has the City concerned due to the fact that we depend on the volunteers to assist the career firefighters during emergency alarms. We are not alone in this dilemma. For example, Yakima County Fire Protection District #5, which protects the entire Lower Yakima County with the exception of the cities with a fire department, has seen their volunteer numbers decrease over the past 7 years from around 275 to about 200 (A. Walker, personal communication, October 10, 1997).

We have experienced this decrease in numbers for various reasons. The main reason is that we are not able to recruit new volunteers to replace the volunteers leaving. Over the past three years we have added only two volunteers to our ranks. During this same period, we have lost five volunteers. Two of the volunteers were hired on as career firefighters, one volunteer we let go due to ethical problems, and the other two volunteers moved out of the area.

The Lower Yakima County fire departments host a recruit academy every spring for those interested in becoming volunteer firefighters. We have many people show interest during the year, but when it is time for them to attend the recruit academy they do not show up. We also have a problem keeping the recruits. In a normal academy, we will start with approximately 30-35 recruits. By the end of the academy, there are usually 20-22 recruits that actually complete

the academy. Out of the 22 who successfully complete the academy, usually 8-10 are still volunteers at the end of the first year (A. Walker, personal communication, October 10, 1997).

This research paper relates to the Strategic Management of Change class of the Executive Fire Officer Program as it shows how to use the first two steps of the Change Management Model; Analysis and Planning.

The ultimate goal of this research paper is to increase the number of active volunteer firefighters on the Toppenish Fire Department with the formation of a cadet program through the local high school. Actual implementation of this program is limited to the acceptance of the program by many people, organizations, and laws that may hinder or help with its success.

Literature Review

The literature that was reviewed for this research project was directed at the successful implementation of other cadet programs, their requirements, their reasons for implementing cadet programs, their training programs, and the laws and regulations that dictated their cadet programs.

There are a variety of cadet programs set up around the United States. There is one cadet program, the Explorers, that is set up through the Boy Scouts of America. This is for both young men and women and also benefits the cadets as well as the fire departments. “Exploring Search & Rescue”, Thomas Matteo (March-April 1993) defines exploring as:

...a division of the Boy Scouts of America for young men and women aged 14 through 20. Its purpose is to bring a character-building, citizenship-training, and fitness program to the youth of America. These posts specialize in a variety of career or recreational programs designed to provide service, social, citizenship, outdoor, and fitness activities. (p. 48-B)

In “The Future of the Fire Service”, Robert A. Williams (April 1989) cites Roy Rhodes, the associate national director of the Boy Scout Exploring Division, as saying “Fire exploring has been growing steadily in popularity since it was established in the mid-1950s.” (p. 73) He also quotes J. Patrick O’Keefe, Sr., captain with the Long Beach, California Fire Department, as commenting about

the cadets, “The program provides them with great direction for a career and even if they don’t continue in that line, they come out as better young people.” (p. 72)

In “A Model Explorer Post: Littleton, Massachusetts”, Earl Banks (April 1989) states “In securing volunteers for the fire service, the best place to start is with the young people of the community.” (p. 74) He goes on to say that there are two important steps in making the younger people feel that what they are doing is important to the community. The two steps are defined as follows:

The first important step in providing an explorer program is to have complete approval from all local fire and town government officials....The second step is to acquire uniforms, badges and firefighting gear so members are recognized as an integral part of the fire service program. (p.74)

Other cadet programs are set up through local high schools. One such program is being used by the Frederick County (MD) Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association and the Frederick County Public Schools. In “Fire/Rescue Vocational Training Program”, Clarence White (February, 1994) states “The program, which has been approved by both the Frederick County and Maryland State Boards of Education, is designed to provide high school students with a knowledge of fire, rescue, and emergency medical skills and techniques.” (p. 29)

Montgomery High School has a cadet program that is provided through the cooperative effort of the Montgomery County Department of Fire and Rescue

Services, the Fire and Rescue Commission, and the individual fire departments. The program had its inception in 1973 and has had approximately 500 students successfully complete it as of May 1993. Other fire departments in Maryland that have instituted cadet programs are Carroll County, Frederick County, Baltimore City, and Prince George's County (Schappert, 1993).

The Rochester Fire Department and East High School in Rochester, NY have created a firefighter intern program in which 21 juniors were enrolled in at the time of the article written. Their intern program runs for a minimum of two years and the interns must work a minimum number of hours to qualify to take the civil service exam. In "Firefighter Intern Program", Charles D. Ippolito (June 1993) states "The time has come to change the traditional approach to recruitment and training." He goes on to explain:

The concept of involving teens in the fire service is nothing new. For years volunteer departments have been doing it so successfully that a large number of the candidates for our last firefighter exam were already volunteer firefighters. Since there was no mechanism in place to offer this type of training and experience to city youth, we developed the Fire Intern Program...Over the past five years, 25 percent of our candidates had come from city schools, so we knew that there was a large pool of quality candidates to choose from. (p. 22)

The cadet programs have been an asset to the fire departments and have also benefited the young people of the communities in helping them grow into responsible adults. The cadet programs have also been a benefit to the communities. In “Emergency Services Explorers”, R. John Schmidt (Winter 1995) states “Besides providing an excellent resource for emergency services, the Explorer Post provides an opportunity for the youth to challenge themselves to improve their skills, both mentally and physically. The post has an all-around positive influence in the community.” (p. 19) In Firefighter Internship: A Class By Itself”, Katherine Hickey (September 1986) quotes James Liska, a school instructor at West Milwaukee High School, as saying the following:

The intern program has been a boon to the fire department in two ways. First, it provides an opportunity to get prospective members- -it’s a good way of picking out talent. It’s good public relations for the department, as it involves firefighters directly with the community. The program is gaining a good reputation. (p.19)

In “Cadet Training Programs in Maryland”, Robert J. Schappert III (May 1993) states “In the past three years alone, this program has achieved a retention rate of 60% within the volunteer system.” (p.5)

Chris Eckert (July-August 1995) remarks in “Fire Department Programs” the following:

While this concept is not new, there seems to be a renewed interest in recruiting young people between the ages of 16 and 18 to provide support functions for the regular department. Not only does this provide immediate assistance to the fire department by functions, a junior auxiliary provides for long term, far reaching benefits. Some of these benefits include:

the ability to train the junior in order to allow almost immediate assignment in the regular department upon reaching the age of 18; many times an interest in the emergency services field is sparked before a career choice is made, allowing an individual to seek the appropriate educational background that is ever increasingly required for a career in firefighting or a related field; and fire department service provides individuals with the opportunity to be involved in a para-military organization and may foster a disciplined and team oriented approach toward solving problems and accomplishing goals. (p.6)

Though the different cadet programs are instituted in various ways, the main reasons for starting a program are similar. The main purposes of the cadet programs are to supplement the current volunteer and/or career staff, to assist in public education, and/or to help in other support services.

The different cadet programs also allow the cadets to have different responsibilities. Some programs allow the cadets to combat structural fires while others only allow the cadets to be in support roles during emergency alarms. In “Cadets - The first step in a career”, Glenn Nixon (November 1986) explains:

“Cadets are not allowed to fight interior structure fires or enter an area where SCBA’s are required. But we can attack exterior fires with the permission of the company officer and we can do salvage work and overhaul when the environment is safe.” (p. 4)

In Littleton, Massachusetts, Banks explains what their cadets are able to do as follows:

All post members automatically respond to any second alarm, search and rescue call or brush fire. At the scene, although explorers are not allowed to enter a burning building until it is declared under control, they lay lines from the hydrant, refill self-contained breathing apparatus bottles, provide traffic and crowd control, perform ladder operation and retrieve needed equipment. After overhaul and wetdown, post members are taken through the building and learn how and where the fire started and how it spread. Back at the station, explorers clean and store equipment, repack trucks and refill air bottles (Banks et al., 1989).

The Wichita Fire Department has a ride-out program available to their cadets. To qualify for this program, the cadet must have been in the fire post for at least one year and be 16 years old. They are then able to ride with the city firefighters and respond with them to alarms. In the Tampa Fire Department, the post members are alerted to all general box alarms. They act as a support group for the regular firefighters (Williams et al., 1989).

In West Milwaukee, Wisconsin, they have a different requirement after they finish their cadet program. “After successful completion of the program, students take part in a 24-hour tour of duty at a fire station, during which they respond to alarms and assist in equipment maintenance and routine housekeeping chores” (Hickey et al., 1986).

In many of the cadet programs, the laws of the state dictate what the cadets are able to do. As Harry R. Carter, Ph.D. (April 1988) states in “Junior Firefighters: Our Investment in the Future”: “The labor laws of New Jersey were reviewed, because there are certain definite limitations placed upon the use of minors for task involving a degree of danger” (p. 128).

In Orange County, California “Regulations prohibit explorers from entering a burning building, but the youngsters assist in all other aspects of firefighting” (Williams et al., 1989).

In New Jersey, there are definite and strict rules about what cadets are able to participate in:

Due to their age, junior firefighters are regulated by the New Jersey Child Labor Law N.J.S.A. 34:2-21. Quite simply, the law states “No minor under 18 years of age shall be employed, permitted or suffered to work in, about, or in connection with: Injurious quantities of toxic or noxious dust, gases, vapors or fumes.” This means that Juniors are not permitted to engage in firefighting. Additionally, Junior Firefighters are not permitted to participate in any activity that would expose them to the same degree of hazard as a regular member of the fire department. These activities would include the operation of motorized power equipment such as the Jaws of Life, chain saws, vent saws and the like (Eckert et al., 1995).

The cadet programs are not only different by what the cadets are able to do while in the program, but also by the requirements/training that the cadets must successfully complete to enter and/or remain in the program. In one program the requirements are as follows:

The training that Littleton explorers receive is the same as that of any firefighter. They are taught the Firefighter I and II courses that include fire chemistry, fire suppression, fire prevention, first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), water rescue and search and rescue. The training is done by the post’s advisors, qualified members of the fire department and with attendance at fire

academies and seminars. Ride-along programs allow qualified members to ride with fire officers to non-emergency investigations and home inspections (Banks et al., 1989).

The Frederick County, Maryland cadet program uses a similar training format as that of the Littleton, MA program. “The formal training is provided through the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI) of the University of Maryland.” In this program there are certain number of required hours for different subjects. The subjects include fire training, EMS training, hazmat training, and rescue technician training (White et al., 1994).

The Frederick County program also has eight acceptance criteria that the students must meet to enter the program. The requirements are as follows:

1. Junior or senior in a Frederick County public high school.
2. At least sixteen years of age at the time of entering the program.
3. Able to participate in the program while completing all other senior requirements for graduation.
4. Member in good standing of a Frederick County volunteer fire or rescue department. This requirement insures that program participants are covered by workmen’s compensation insurance. This is also their source of protective clothing.
5. Successful completion of all Maryland functional tests to insure that program participants have a minimum level of reading,

writing, and comprehension skills which are necessary to keep up with the fast pace of the program.

6. Letter of recommendation from the chief of his/her fire department or rescue squad.
7. Private transportation available when required. Students are required to have their own transportation for approximately half of the class sessions in the event the material being covered extends beyond the end of the school day. These sessions are where practical activities are being covered.
8. Completion of a Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute Verification of Membership form prior to the beginning of the second session of the first program course. This insures that the participant is a member of a fire or rescue department and that they also have a parent's or guardian's approval to participate (White et al., 1994).

In Carroll County, MD the students are required to complete the following training in their cadet program: EMT-A Basic, Fire Essentials modules I-IV, Rescue Technician, and Hazardous Materials Operations. After successfully completing this program, the students earn their Firefighter III certification (Schappert et al., 1993).

In Prince George's County, MD the program runs concurrently with the academic year. The students receive training which focuses on Firefighter I and Emergency Medical Technician-Ambulance during the first semester. The second semester the students are placed in office assignments where they are trained on such procedures as Emergency Medical Services, Fire Prevention, and Communications. The students are also required to pass the first part of their training before continuing on with the program (Schappert et al., 1993).

The Rochester, NY Intern program has three requirements. They are "to successfully complete high school with at least a C average", to learn "the essentials of firefighting", and to be a part of their wellness program. "During the program, the interns are given basically the same training that recruits receive" (Ippolito et al., 1993).

In West Milwaukee, "Some of the qualifications for admission are maturity, grades, physical fitness and teacher recommendation. A personal interview is also required." The training the interns receive equals 138 hours of instruction in all aspects of the fire service and also includes civil service preparation (Hickey et al., 1986).

Procedures

Procedures

The decision was made to conduct research on the possibility of instituting a cadet program in the Toppenish Fire Department for the following reasons: 1) the number of volunteers in the department was decreasing, 2) the number of volunteers responding to emergency alarms was decreasing, and 3) there is a lack of interest by the residents of the Toppenish area to join the ranks of the fire department.

The idea of a cadet program was tossed around about two years ago when one of the volunteer firefighter's son was showing interest in the fire department. He started to spend time around the fire station helping clean the trucks and do whatever odds and ends we would allow him to. Some of the firefighters currently on the roster started out on the jr. "make and break" team. They were involved in the fire department because their fathers were members. We thought this might be a good way of involving the children of the firefighters and their friends to help support the fire department. This idea was dropped when the budget process showed that there would not be any funds to provide for this type of program at that time.

This program was chosen as my research project because it was a program that could help with the lack of response by the firefighters. The Strategic Management of Change class will be helpful in the processes of the Change Management Model. The first two steps of the Change Management Model,

analysis and planning, will be discussed in this paper. The final two steps, implementation and evaluation, will be done at a later time if the program is instituted in the fire department.

Analysis

The number of volunteer firefighters on the roster of the fire department is decreasing. This decrease is due to the following factors: 1) The Toppenish Fire Department has hired two of the volunteer firefighters as career firefighters during the last two years, 2) we have added two volunteer firefighters to the roster during the past two years, but neither of the firefighters stayed with the department for more than one year, 3) two volunteers moved out of the area and therefore dropped from the firefighter ranks, 4) two volunteers quit due to personal and/or professional time constraints, and 5) there has been very little interest shown from the public to join the fire department as a volunteer.

We are also having a problem with the number of volunteers showing up on emergency alarms particularly in the late evening and early morning. This has occurred due to the following: 1) we have a decrease in the number of volunteers on our roster, 2) many of the volunteers have attained jobs which do not allow them to respond as freely to the emergency alarms, 3) many of the volunteers are reaching retirement age and are not as willing to respond to alarms in the late evening and early morning, and 4) some of the volunteers are getting burned out after many years as a firefighter.

Due to the conditions above, some type of change is needed to attract more volunteer firefighters. The normal procedures of advertising through the news media and word of mouth have not satisfactorily brought in the number of volunteers that we deem necessary. I determined that we needed to tap a new resource pool to pull the volunteers from.

The potential destabilizing forces that I am able to identify are: 1) the City Manager, 2) the City Council, 3) the potential of the City of Toppenish to financially afford to train, obtain protective equipment, reimburse similarly to current volunteers, and provide pagers, 4) the cooperation of the high schools, 5) the state laws pertaining to using students in volunteer firefighter status, 6) the desire of the students to participate in the program, 7) the support of the parents of the students, and 8) the buy-in from the firefighters, both career and volunteer, to support the program.

I have discussed the idea of a cadet program with some of the potential destabilizing forces. I have also had some input from some of the other forces. The following is some of the feedback I have received from the potential destabilizing forces which I have had contact with.

The City Manager is in favor of the program. He has said he will support this program to increase the firefighter response to the emergency alarms. He is particularly interested in the potential to get cadets and eventually volunteers who are bilingual in English/Spanish.

The financial position of the City of Toppenish is poor. We would have to start off with a small group of three to four cadets. This would use most of the reserve equipment we have. The reimbursement to the cadets could be kept to a minimum if the school agrees to count their time toward their required public service hours for graduation.

We have already been contacted by eight to 10 students in the local high schools that have expressed interest in becoming volunteer firefighters when they reach the age of 18. The interest in the program will be greater than what we are able to handle. We will be challenged to choose which students will eventually become cadets from those that express interest.

The parental support should not be a problem. Most of the interest expressed so far has come from the firefighters' children and their children's friends. The parents I have contacted are supportive of the potential program and their children's involvement in the program.

The firefighters have given their support for the program. I have personally spoken to many of the firefighters and they think we are in need of some type of program that will revive the membership of the volunteer firefighters. I also gave a survey to the firefighters to see what type of support I do have. The survey shows that the firefighters are supportive of the program and they are also willing to help with the training and time needed to prepare the cadets to become firefighters.

I also have support from our neighboring fire district. They have stated that they would be willing to help set up the program because this will also help with their volunteer corps. They also stated that if this system worked, they could duplicate it in the other areas that they cover.

The survey was handed out during a training exercise and the firefighters were told they could take them home and fill them out if they wanted to. They were advised that they could either mail them back or drop them off at the station if they were concerned about anonymity.

The potential destabilizing forces will have a great impact on the success or failure of a cadet program in the Toppenish Fire Department. If one of the potential destabilizing forces does not support the program, the cadet program will not take place.

The perspective of change will be both transitional and transformational. I will be changing the entire perspective of our firefighter program. I will also be changing the way we recruit volunteers. The main focus will be on bringing the cadets on board and recruiting them as volunteers on their 18th birthday. This change will require an organizational commitment by all the firefighters for training, leadership, and buy-in of the program.

The start date for this program will be targeted for either the summer break of 1998 or the beginning of the 1998-1999 school year. This will give ample time for the program to be set up. This will also give us time to notify the students of

the local high school and will also give them time to arrange all the necessary signatures and paper work to participate in the program.

The plan is to start with a small group of 4-6 students and gradually increase the number of students until the optimum number is reached. The optimum number has yet to be determined. This will be determined by the results of the on-going evaluations of the program.

Planning

The facilitative forces I have identified are as follows: career firefighters, volunteer firefighters, city manager, city council, city residents, students, high school administration and teachers, and the parents of the students.

The restraining forces I have identified are as follows: city council, budget constraints, volunteer firefighters, high school administration and teachers, parents of the students, and the city manager.

The personnel I selected to help develop a vision for the organizational change include myself and the five career firefighters. I have opened the discussion to any of the volunteer firefighters who would like to help with the organization and planning of the program. This strategy does not match any the CMM describes, but the make up of the Toppenish Fire Department requires me to combine two of the strategies identified to best suit the department.

The vision statement produced by the team is as follows: “The vision of the Toppenish Fire Department cadet program is to recruit and train cadets to assist

the department in our efforts to best serve the community of Toppenish in fire prevention, public education, fire suppression, and emergency medical services. It is also the intent of the program to increase the number of volunteer firefighters in the department through recruitment of these cadets when they reach the age requirement.”

At this time, I have not completed the rest of the Change Management Model for implementing a cadet program in the Toppenish Fire Department. I will continue with the CMM until the program is implemented or it is determined that the cadet program will not be in the best interest of the department.

Results

I conducted a survey with the firefighters to determine if they would support the possibility of a cadet program. I was also interested in how much participation I could expect from the firefighters in setting up and conducting the program. There were 18 surveys handed out and 17 surveys were returned. The questions in the survey and their results are discussed below.

1. Are you comfortable with the number of volunteer

firefighters the department currently has? There were only

three firefighters that stated they were comfortable with the number

of volunteers we currently have. Thirteen said they were not satisfied and one did not answer yes or no.

2. Will you support a cadet program to help raise the number of volunteer firefighters we have? Fifteen of the firefighters stated they would support a cadet program to help raise the number of volunteers on the department. One person said they would not support the program and one person did not answer yes or no.

3. Will you commit to helping with the training of the cadets?

Fifteen firefighters claimed they were committed to assisting with the training of the cadets. One person said he/she would not be willing to help with the training of the cadets. One person did not answer yes or no.

4. If a cadet program was started, what criteria do you feel would be important in choosing the candidates? The criteria listed were grades, age, driving record, recommendations, and other. The firefighters could choose as many of the criteria they felt were important in choosing which students would be the best to place onto our department as cadets.

Twelve firefighters stated that grades were an important criteria. Nine felt that both age and driving record were important criteria. Seven felt that recommendations should be required. Four marked the other category and all four wrote in that they felt background checks should be required before placing a student into our cadet program.

5. How many cadets do you envision as being the optimal number?

Six firefighters felt that four cadets would be the optimal number. Seven firefighters felt that six cadets would be the most beneficial to the department. There were none that selected eight cadets as being the optimal number. Three firefighters chose the other category. Of the three, two wrote in that 15 would be the optimal number of cadets for the department. The other one wrote in 20 as being the optimal number of cadets for the department. There was one firefighter that did not state what he/she felt was the optimal number of cadets would be.

Discussion

The literature reviewed for this research project dealt with the successful implementation of cadet programs in various fire departments. There was not any literature reviewed which stated negative outcomes of cadet programs. I was unable to find any literature to discuss this side of the issue.

The main reason the departments were instituting cadet programs was to supplement their current roster of firefighters. The programs were being used in paid departments as well as volunteer and combination departments. The volunteer departments main concern was the lack of firefighter response and/or

the reduced numbers of volunteers over the past years. The paid departments mainly used the cadets to help with their support services.

All the articles I reviewed stated how the cadet program has helped the department in their efforts to increase their public education, fire prevention, fire suppression, emergency medical services, and/or volunteer recruitment in their respective community. Many of the departments did not allow their cadets to participate in fire suppression due to state laws.

The main emphasis the departments used their cadets was for fire prevention/public education. They were able to participate in many more public education programs because of their cadets. The main reason given was that the department would not have been able to have personnel at the program if they did not have the cadets.

One big plus that the programs have shown is the long-term effect the cadet programs have had on recruiting both volunteers and career firefighters for the departments. Most of the departments have made comments about how they have recruited the cadets to become volunteer or career firefighters after they became of age and as openings occurred. The advantages of this type of recruiting is that the department has trained the firefighter to the procedures of their department, the time and money spent had a long-term benefit, the firefighters can be screened during the cadet program, and the department is getting a person they know has the knowledge, training, experience, and attitude to fit into their department.

The survey done showed that the firefighters would support a cadet program in the Toppenish Fire Department. Most of the firefighters feel that there is a need to increase the number of firefighters. The reasons they feel this way is because there has been a decrease in the number of volunteers responding to emergency alarms and there has been a decrease in the number of volunteers on the current roster. There are a few volunteers that have expressed the possibility of retiring from the volunteer ranks within the next few years. They have been volunteers for over 20 years and are ready to hang up their turnouts.

The firefighters' desire to implement a cadet program is shown by the number of firefighters willing to commit to helping with the training of the cadets. It will take more than just a few firefighters to make this program work for us. We only have one firefighter on duty 60-75% of the time. We do not have a training officer (except myself) and we do not have the money to pay overtime to the career firefighters for every training drill that will be required for the training of the cadets.

The firefighters feel that it is important to have some measurable criteria for the students to pass before becoming cadets. Most of the firefighters would like to see a combination of requirements to be met by the students. The criteria they would like to see are adequate grades, age, driving record, recommendations, and background checks. The number of cadets they would like to see, at least to start with, is from 4-6 cadets.

I have a lot more work to do in the planning stage before implementing the program. There are many people and/or groups I must meet with before going forward with the program. I must meet with the school, City Council, and the City Attorney to determine if the program will be possible. If the program becomes reality and is implemented, there needs to be a continuing evaluation of the program to consider if the program is working and if it should be continued. This evaluation process will also help to improve

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based upon the literature I have reviewed and the survey that I conducted with the Toppenish Firefighters. These recommendations are based on my perceived need to increase the emergency alarm response by the volunteer firefighters and to increase the number of active volunteers currently on the roster. This need is based upon the need of the fire department to continue to offer the services the residents of Toppenish have come to expect.

My recommendations are as follows:

- 1) Continue with the planning for a cadet program for the Toppenish Fire Department. Based upon the information I have reviewed, I feel that the conclusion will be to implement a cadet program.

2) Implement a cadet program in the Toppenish Fire Department to maintain the high standards and expectations in fire prevention, fire suppression, emergency medical services, public education, and other programs the fire department offers. The optimal number to start the program with would be four cadets. The number of cadets for a class would increase to eight or ten after the initial start of the program. The determining factors for the number of students would include student interest, money available for turnouts and pagers, availability of firefighters to conduct training, and the cooperation of the school district.

3) Work with the other organizations to make the cadet program a positive experience for all concerned. This will help to make the program a success, not only for the implementation of the program, but also for the years to come.

4) Continue to evaluate the program to improve the training, firefighter retention, and recruiting of the cadets.

5) Use the cadet program to recruit new volunteers. This will help increase the number of volunteers to the level we are committed to. This increase in volunteers will also help with the volunteer response to emergency alarms.

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